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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE VIENNA DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION

Letter dated 20 October 1994 from the Permanent Representative of Latvia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit a statement dated 14 October 1994 by H.E. Mr. Maris Gailis, Prime Minister of Latvia, on Latvia's national programme for the protection and promotion of human rights.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 100 (d).

(Signed) Aivars BAUMANIS
Permanent Representative

Annex

STATEMENT DATED 14 OCTOBER 1994 BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF LATVIA ON LATVIA'S NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

On 4 May 1990, when Latvia acceded to more than 50 international instruments, it took upon itself the responsibility to observe and protect the rights of all persons regardless of whether they are citizens or non-citizens, Latvians or non-Latvians, children, or physically, mentally or otherwise disabled.

Latvia participated at the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in June 1993. In the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 1/ countries were invited to create national programmes for the protection and promotion of human rights, so as to promote stability in each country as well as to prevent the creation of conflict in a global context.

I am satisfied that Latvia is one of the first countries that has responded to this invitation and shown its sense of responsibility in creating its own national programme for the protection and promotion of human rights.

To accomplish this task, this summer Latvia invited a high-level international expert mission to visit Latvia. The mission was organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its goal was to prepare a detailed needs assessment for Latvia's national programme. The mission was composed of the Federal Human Rights Commissioner of Australia and representatives of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Council of Europe.

The most important recommendation made by the mission, and which definitely will be implemented within the national programme, is the need for an independent human rights protection institution.

I believe that such an institution must be accessible to society at large and that its main priorities would be the following: first, to provide information to the general public about what human rights actually are; second, to provide objective information on the rights of each and every individual; and third, to review and, if possible, find solutions to individual complaints, applying principles of conciliation.

Recommendations presented in the report of the international high-level mission will serve as the basis for the creation of Latvia's independent human rights institution. This structure would be the cornerstone of Latvia's national programme. The responsible Latvian organs will be the State Minister for Human Rights, within the Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Chairman of this institution would be a well-known and respected member of society appointed by the Government and confirmed by law in the Saeima.

It is the Government's responsibility to guarantee to all of Latvia's residents equality before the law and equal protection against discrimination.

I look forward to cooperating with all persons residing in Latvia, as well as with non-governmental organizations and international organizations during the realization and implementation of the national programme for the protection and promotion of human rights.

Notes

1/ Report of the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 14-25 June 1993 (A/CONF.157/24 (Part I)), chap. III.